

Sacred Heart Major Seminary
The College of Liberal Arts
 Fall Term 2008

Course: PHL 380, Natural Theology,
 Three Credit Hours; TR 9—10:25 a.m.
 Instructor: Dr. Victor Salas, Jr.
 Office Hours: TR 1:30 p.m.—3:30 p.m., or by appointment
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General Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the issues and arguments that constitute the philosophical study of God. Questions to be examined include whether belief in God is rational, language about God, and what can be known about the attributes of God. Modern and contemporary objections to God's existence and nature will be considered.

Specific Course Description

This course will have three sections. The first will inquire into the nature and aims of natural theology. We shall focus especially on St. Thomas's understanding of natural theology and turn to selected readings from his Commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate* as well as his Commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. After sketching out what is implied in such an understanding of natural theology, the second division of our course will turn to modern and contemporary philosophies that would seem to stand as impediments to the possibility of a natural theology. Here, we shall consider both David Hume and Immanuel Kant's criticisms of attaining any natural knowledge of God. Next, we shall turn to postmodern critiques of rationality, which call into question any rational justification for God's existence. Our course, here, will focus briefly upon Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel Foucault. Finally, the third portion of our course will seek to overcome the obstacles set in its way by both modern and postmodern thinkers. We shall consider contemporary Thomistic responses to these contemporary challenges and then, through further reading of Thomas's texts themselves, seek to construct a positive natural theology.

Prerequisites

PHL 450, Metaphysics

Required Texts

Most of our reading will come from handouts and also online sources.

James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*
 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2006)

Course Requirements

The course requirements will be as follows:

1. Midterm Examination: 30%
2. Final Examination: 30%
3. Term Paper: 30%
4. Class Participation: 10%

N.B. No extra credit is offered under any circumstances.

Attendance Policy

The student is expected to attend every class unless there is a “grave reason” not to do so. I, not the student, am the sole person who determines what is or is not a “grave reason.” The student should be advised that if he or she misses four or more classes, he or she will be automatically dropped from the course.

Academic Honesty

You are expected both by the policy of this Institution and by the demands of charity to be honest in all your work, academic or otherwise. Any form of academic dishonesty cannot and will not be tolerated. Occurrences of academic dishonesty will result both in the student’s receiving a failing grade on the assignment and in the notification of all appropriate authorities.

Grading Scale

95-100	A	80-82	B-	65-69	D+
90-94	A-	77-79	C+	60-64	D
87-89	B+	73-76	C	0-59	F
83-86	B	70-72	C-		

Tentative Schedule of Readings

1. Introductory Lecture
 2. Thomas Aquinas Commentary on Boethius *De Trinitate* Q. 5, aa. 2-4 (handout)
 3. Thomas Aquinas Commentary on the *Metaphysics* Preface (handout)
 4. David Hume *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Sections 2-4 (handout)
 5. David Hume (cont.) Section 10
 6. Immanuel Kant *Critique of Pure Reason* A592/B620-A630/B658
 7. Immanuel Kant (cont.)
 8. Smith *Whose Afraid of Postmodernism? (WAP?)* Chs. 1, 2
 9. Smith *WAP?* Ch. 3
 10. Smith *WAP?* Ch. 4
 11. W. Norris Clarke, S.J. “Is Natural Theology Still Viable Today?” Handout
 12. Ernan McMullin, “Natural Science and Belief in a Creator” Handout
 13. Ernan McMullin (cont.)
14. **MIDTERM**
15. Thomas Aquinas *Summa theologiae* I (ST) q. 2 (online)
 16. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 3 (aa. 1-4)
 17. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 4
 18. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 5
 19. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 8
 20. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 12
 21. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 13
 22. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 14
 23. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 19
 24. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 27
 25. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 28
 26. Thomas Aquinas ST q. 29
 27. Concluding Lecture **TERM PAPER DUE TODAY**

Select Bibliography

Oliva Blanchette, *Philosophy of Being* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

- W. Norris Clarke, SJ, *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being, God, Person* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).
- Etienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: PIMS, 1952).
- _____. *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956).
- Thomas Guarino, *Foundations of Systematic Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2005).
- Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- Norman Kretzmann, *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
- Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).
- Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).
- Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- _____. *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)
- Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word* (New York: Continuum Press, 1994).